

their own paycheck for their productivity. Average hourly earnings have not kept up with inflation for the past 2 years, and they barely kept even the year before that.

Median family income has failed to keep up with inflation every year under President Bush. Mr. Speaker, even more disturbing than the general stagnation in wages and incomes is the growing gap between the "haves" and the "have-nots" in this country, as income earnings disparities have widened.

This is an extremely troubling trend for everyone in our country. Those who are already well-to-do are indeed doing very well in the Bush economy. But the typical American family is struggling to make ends meet in the face of high costs for energy, health care and college education for their children.

This chart illustrates the problem very clearly. The red bars show the growth in the inflation adjusted usual weekly earnings of full-time wage and salary workers under President Bush at different points in the earnings distribution.

You have to be in the upper half of the distribution to have seen any gain. Earnings at the top have grown fastest relative to inflation, and earnings at the bottom have fallen farthest behind inflation.

I would note the contrast with the last 5 years of the Clinton Administration, which is illustrated with the blue bars when earnings and gains were strong and spread throughout the earnings distribution.

Mr. Speaker, the economic policies of the Bush Administration are not benefiting ordinary American families. The Bush economy and Bush economic policies have produced a widening gap between the "haves" and the "have-nots," and they have produced a legacy of deficits and debt that leaves us unprepared to deal with the budget challenges posed by the retirement of the baby-boom generation.

And that weakens the future standard of living of our children and grandchildren. We need to do better. We can do better if we focus on policies that address the economic challenges facing the ordinary American worker.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Mr. DREIER) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. DREIER addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. EMANUEL) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. EMANUEL addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

PROBLEMS WITH MEDICARE PRESCRIPTION DRUG PLAN

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Florida (Ms. CORRINE BROWN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. CORRINE BROWN of Florida. Mr. Speaker, the countdown to the Bush drug tax, 44 days before May 15, May 15.

Last week, during the break, I held six town hall meetings throughout my district on the new Medicare Part D prescription drug program. And I would encourage all of my colleagues to do the same. Not only did it give my constituents a chance to get the help that they needed and answered their questions, it gave me an opportunity to really find out how the new program is working or, should I say, not working.

Unfortunately, I heard a lot of horror stories from a lot of people. Not only is picking a plan extremely complicated, but the arbitrary date of May 15 makes absolutely no sense. I have been an elected official for over 25 years. And this is the first time I have seen people who are going to be penalized for the rest of their lives if they do not sign up by a certain date, May 15.

Not only having them to set a ridiculous short time to sign up for this complicated plan, but the next time seniors can sign up will be November 15 through December 31, that includes both Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays. So it is very complicated for seniors.

The Republican leadership wrote a bill that prevents the Secretary of Health and Human Services from negotiating the price of the drug, even though both the Secretary of Veterans Affairs and the Secretary of DOT are negotiating these prices right now.

Can you imagine what would happen if Wal-Mart, if we told Wal-Mart they could not get a reduction price on bulk buying? Every Republican in this House would be on this floor screaming bloody murder. But when it is the needs of our seniors, there is a deaf ear; you do not hear them.

This bill allows the private plans to take drugs off of their approved lists and even charge more for drugs during that year. They can charge more, while seniors are locked in and cannot change plans until the next year.

It also turns seniors into criminals. Yes, criminals. What do I mean? If they buy drugs that are cheaper, let us say in Mexico or Canada, they will be criminals.

And one of the most troubling aspects of this bill, and the one that most people talk about is the doughnut. What do you mean doughnut? Well, no coverage is provided after you spend \$2,250 until your cost reaches \$5,001. That is \$3,000 out-of-pocket.

Lastly, I want to talk about the independent pharmacists. This bill is killing your small town pharmacists who have been in business for years. They still know their customers by name. They are the only pharmacists who are

still delivering medicine to seniors who cannot come out of the house or after hours when someone needs an emergency prescription.

This Congress needs to do the right thing for our parents and grandparents and extend this silly deadline date of May 15, allow the Secretary to negotiate bulk prices, and should make the appropriate changes that will save America's local pharmacies from extinction.

Again, I encourage my colleagues to hold their meetings and talk to their seniors and pharmacies about the drug plan. And seniors, for God's sake, please look at this: May 15, you need to sign up. But if you have questions, call Medicare counselors at 1-800-Medicare, that is, 1-800-633-4227. That is May 15. That is the drop-dead date. Thank you.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. JONES) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. JONES of North Carolina addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Ohio (Ms. KAPTUR) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. KAPTUR addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

AMERICA'S POLICIES IN IRAQ

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New Mexico (Mr. UDALL) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. UDALL of New Mexico. Mr. Speaker, I just returned from Iraq on a congressional delegation trip with Senator MCCAIN. And I wanted to report to my constituents.

The first thing that I have concluded in looking at the situation there and in visiting there is that we need a special envoy sent by the President of the United States to move forward with a national unity government.

Things on the ground are not going well. Things are deadlocked. There has been no government since 3 months after the election. We have a lame duck government, and we have a crucial international situation going on.

The current government is riddled by corruption and inertia. So, Mr. President, we need to send a special envoy.

Secondly, I visited the troops in Iraq, some New Mexicans and many others from across the country. And when I think of what they have done since the invasion over 3 years ago, it makes me very proud. Saddam Hussein and his sons are out of commission. We have held three elections, and the Iraqis have adopted a constitution.

We have trained over 224,000 troops to the highest levels of training, more than 100,000 police and security personnel. We have spent billions of dollars in reconstruction.